Q & A

Simplicity in the Modern Dental Practice

Five Questions With Zinnovi's Chief Clinical Officer Bhumika Patel, DDS
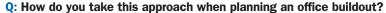
Q: How do you define simplicity in a dental setting?

A: Simplicity boils down to 2 factors: Identify the essential and eliminate the rest. Since 2014, our goal has been to leverage technology to simplify processes, reduce costs, and empower staff and patients. In other words, simplicity means intuitiveness. Have you ever noticed how you can close your eyes and still get a spoon to reach your mouth perfectly; you don't need to think about how it'll work or whether you'll hit the target. Similarly, the technologies I like to use best "know" what I am trying to accomplish, and I can figure out how to use them without tedious training. If I can quickly explain to my staff how something works and they grasp it immediately, I will likely find the technology to be intuitive enough to be beneficial to my business. If a product doesn't pass the simplicity test, it could open up an array of new challenges for the staff; the business; and, ultimately, me as the business owner.

Q: What is the biggest area of the business that could benefit from being simplified?

A: The biggest area that comes to mind right away is x-rays. A typical dental sensor in an office can bend nearly 12,000 times per year, and eventually the wires in the cable will break. Plus, the constant plugging, unplugging, and moving of sensors between rooms takes unnecessary time and can lead to connectivity issues if the USB port is overused. And with all this movement, dentists run the risk of delamination if a sensor is dropped. It's actually very easy to eliminate the clutter and unnecessary wear that generally happens through normal operation by converting the standard imaging workflow to a simpler, wireless one.

Bhumika Patel, DDS

Q: What effect does your philosophy of simplicity have on staff, as well as on patients?

A: My biggest goal is to simplify the workflow for my staff, which naturally leads to greater office efficiency. When choosing to implement a new tool or technology into our practice, I look to arm employees with tools that work for them—not tools that make more work. In our office, it is very common to get compliments from our patients about how fast everything was completed and how comfortable they felt throughout the whole process.

Q: How do you take this approach when planning an office buildout?

A: Due to high costs and financial constraints, building or expanding a practice can be incredibly challenging. So I look to tools and technologies that bring simplicity to operations and allow flexibility in the purchasing process. For example, with an x-ray solution like Air2Zed, you can choose between a wireless x-ray head or a swing arm x-ray head and, in both cases, you can get away with buying just one sensor at the beginning to fire images to every computer in the office—saving time and money in the process.

Q: What are some mistakes to avoid when designing your office and your processes?

A: One of the most common mistakes I have seen amongst my colleagues is clutter. Clutter in the office causes chaos in the operation. For example, many practice owners are still purchasing an x-ray head for each room. There used to be a time when this was considered efficient. However, with modern technology, this expense can be minimized while opening up precious space in the treatment rooms. Many offices have been moving toward a portable x-ray option coupled with a wireless Air2Zed system, resulting in time and cost savings. I've heard many doctors say "It's just easy to have an x-ray unit in every room." What many don't consider, however, is that the things in our practice that are easy to do are even easier *not* to do.

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> — *Bhumika Patel, DDS, Chief Clinical Officer, Zinnovi*

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